

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

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THE RULES OF ASEPTIC AND ANTISEPTIC SURGERY. A practical Treatise for the Use of Students and the General Practitioner. By ARPAD G. GERSTER, M. D., Professor of Surgery at the New York Polyclinic; Visiting Surgeon to the Mount Sinai and German Hospitals; pp. 332. With 248 photo-engravings and two chromo-lithographic plates. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1888.

The well known author of this book has prepared a manual of aseptic and antiseptic *technique* which reflects upon himself the greatest credit, and which will do much to hasten the universal acceptance of the newer methods among those who do not adopt them on account either of ignorance or inability to comprehend them.

It is not a complete manual of operative surgery, and is not intended to supplant any of the well known works on this subject. It is, however, a complete exposition of so much of the theory and the principles of asepsis and antiseptis as is required for their proper observance, and a complete description of all details by which success in such work is to be achieved. His thesis is that dictum now generally accepted that the *surgeon's acts determine the fate of a fresh wound, and that its infection and suppuration are due to his technical faults of omission and commission.*

As Cheyne has well shown modern wound treatment is based entirely on long accepted and well known principles of preservation of organic material, and these principles always must underlie the practice; the particular methods may change from time to time, as they have notably changed since Lister first showed us his early forms of dressings, but the *facts never*. For irrigation the author uses, of course, the mercuric chloride solution: for the instruments he advises carbolic acid. For the peritoneal cavity he recommends the boro-salicylic solution. For dry dressings he employs iodoform alone or with bismuth subnitrate. We do not find mention either of hydronaphthol, zinc oxide or naphthaline, all of which we have found both cheap and as reliable as the others. The differences between aseptic and antiseptic work find frequent illustration throughout the book. Neuber's bone

drainage tubes have been discarded by the author, who finds nothing so suitable as black rubber; but he still practices Neuber's method of canalization without other drainage. Schede's healing by means of a moist clot he both describes and recommends, though he does not give it a place of the greatest importance.

Chapter v, he devotes to special applications of the aseptic method. This constitutes a pretty full discussion of regional surgery, less time being devoted to the instrumental technique than to the enforcement of aseptic practices, though the pages bristle with practical hints of great value. Of the features covered by this chapter we will stop only to notice what is said about radical cure of hernia, in which our author's experience though not extensive has been very satisfactory. He follows, in the main, Czerny, whose method has always seemed to us the best, though we have for some time now substituted two or three silver sutures for his shoe lace catgut suture of the external ring, with better satisfaction. We do not observe that he advises the application of the same method to the radical cure of large or small umbilical herniæ, though an experience of several cases has taught us its advantages.

For chapter vi, which deals with the natural history of idiopathic suppuration and its treatment we have a warm welcome, since now—perhaps for the first time—the student can find in English that which our text-books have been so slow to teach,—a summary of our present knowledge of the bacterial origin of pus; in other words the parasitic causation of phlegmon. While this portion of the book seems to be rather the result of diligent study of the work of Koch and Rosenbach, than the product of the author's own research, it is none the less welcome since nothing better can be found. A number of Koch's photographs are reproduced and three of Rosenbach's colored plates are introduced by which the text is well elucidated. This part of the chapter is comparatively short; so short that we wish it might have been elaborated, since we consider it one of the greatest value at the present time. The balance of it is given over to the diagnosis and treatment of phlegmon, under which caption is included necrosis, acute and cold abscesses and fistulæ. Here, as throughout the book, the most radical and hence the best methods are advised and illustrated. In not a few places reference to the surgical anatomy of the parts is made, by means of which the better antiseptic attack on their diseases is favored. One statement, which alone is a sufficient refutation of all argument against antiseptic methods, deserves to be quoted and emphasized, that in *ten years* of extensive surgical practice, Dr. Gerster has had but *four cases of erysipelas*.

The third part of the book is devoted to tuberculosis, its aseptic and antiseptic treatment. If the author had seen fit to do as much for the profession at large in discussing the pathology of tuberculosis, as he did in considering that of suppuration, we should have been spared a certain feeling of disappointment; the more so, since we have been led to expect that this would constitute a considerable portion of the work. There is still the same necessity for widely diffusing clear notions on this topic that obtains with reference to the other. When eminent surgeons and authors of treatises, or editors of cyclopædias are still to be numbered among the unbelievers, surely too much cannot be said by such men as Dr. Gerster. Still as he has seen fit to treat the subject rather in its practical relations, we can only express a hope that he will elaborate the chapter in a subsequent edition. Most of this chapter is devoted to the consideration of exsections with suitable dressings for the wounded parts. He gives an excellent description of Wladimiroff-Mickulicz' osteoplastic resection of the tarsus.

Part iv takes up gonorrhea, and its antiseptic treatment, and part v syphilis, aseptic and antiseptic treatment of external lesions.

Their consideration is more *apropos* here than might at first appear: in the former he has a great deal of value to say about the endoscope and treatment of urethral lesions by its aid: the latter is brief, but thoroughly practical.

A feature of the book is the introduction of a large number of illustrative cases, which help to carry conviction as to the value of the methods according to which they are treated, and which make a valuable record of the author's work: nevertheless, it appears to us that some of them might have been omitted without detriment.

But the most conspicuous feature which the work presents is constituted by the illustrations, most of which are photo-reproductions from negatives taken by the author, or under his immediate direction, and are beautiful examples of the photo-engraver's art. Exception can only be taken to a few of them which though attractive, yet, reveal nothing in any instructive detail; such, for instance, are figs. 100, 114, 185, 199, 214. But this is, perhaps, captious criticism, since they are simply superfluous. In the main, however, the illustrations do as much to convey valuable lessons as does the text, and each vies with the other in value.

The paper is, as befits such work, heavy and finely finished, and the typographical and artistic appearance of the book is so excellent that we consider it the finest medical book of its kind ever issued in America. It is one of the greatest value to every one who aspires to do

even a little surgery, since he should aim to do this little well, and author and publisher should each be proud of their respective shares in its production.

ROSSELL PARK.

LEHRBUCH DER ALLGEMEINEN CHIRURGIE NACH DEM HEUTIGEN STANDPUNKTE DER WISSENSCHAFT. Bearbeitet von Prof. Dr. H. FISCHER, (Breslau). Stuttgart, Ferd. Enke, 1887. New York, G. E. Stechert.

TEXTBOOK OF GENERAL SURGERY, ACCORDING TO THE PRESENT STATE OF MEDICAL SCIENCE.

In one large octavo volume of some 900 pages, the author has treated the entire subject of general surgery in such a manner, that the student or practitioner may readily find all that is important, and all that has of late been published in regard to any single question, or chapter in general surgery.

The reader is supposed to possess a fair knowledge of general pathology, but the special surgical pathology is, of course, everywhere given in detail. Where, in treating of any single subject, various conflicting statements present themselves, they have all been admitted and given their due consideration, and where a want of special investigation has made itself felt, this deficiency has been pointed out. For 21 years the author, (as he tells us in the preface), made the contents of this book the subject of special study, and three entire years, he adds, it took him merely to write it out.

From these data some idea of the amount of work contained in the book may be formed, and a glance at the comparatively large amount of matter and historical learning contained in the fine print of the notes readily sustains them.

The extensive use of numerals and letters to mark the divisions and subdivisions of the paragraphs, together with the printing of the headings in interspaced and capital types, gives the book an orderly appearance, and facilitates the finding of any given subject, by reducing the confusion incident to the handling of large amounts of matter.

An extended review of the various chapters cannot here be given; nor is it necessary to do so considering the objective manner in which the matter has been treated. Wherever the author deemed himself called upon to take sides in a question he has done so with the best judgment.

Occasionally the reader is made aware of the difficulties presenting